



# The VICTIM SUPPORT TEAM

SPD DV Victim Support Team, PO Box 34986, Seattle, WA 98124

## Changing the Statistics

### VST's 2010 Training Schedule

By Sarah Sorensen

Building upon the topics covered in the initial 50-hour training Academy, the Victim Support Team provides continued comprehensive training for volunteers throughout the year during monthly meetings.

This year, the Victim Support Team has designed a comprehensive training curriculum that will focus on the findings from the 2008 Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR). In the DVFR, the statistic that is specifically concerning is that women of color and immigrant women who are victims of DV are at a 2.5–3.5 times greater risk for DV homicide than white non-Hispanic women. This statistic is attributed to the increase in barriers to safety and self-sufficiency they face when accessing domestic violence support services. Because VST's primary objective is to connect victims to resources, VST's 2010 training curriculum will reflect a commitment towards working to address this disparity.

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During the January VST meeting the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence presented the findings of the DVFR to set the stage for the rest of this year's monthly meetings. Working with many partnering agencies, we hope to provide volunteers with an understanding of additional barriers to safety that play a part in providing effective crisis intervention.

## 2009 VST Wrap-up: Victim Services

By Dana Lockhart

The Victim Support Team responded to the crisis needs of **464** families affected by domestic violence in 2009.

**311** of these interventions were at the request of an SPD officer.

**104** reports were left for VST volunteers by the SPD DV felony advocates.

**49** domestic violence victims contacted VST directly seeking support and resources.

*When asked about the helpfulness of VST, 2009 program participants said:*

*"Terrific! VST is a great resource.*

*Very helpful."*

*"It was nice to actually talk to someone. In the past, I've only received letters from advocates."*

*"From the bottom of my heart... thank you so much."*

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### 2009 VST Wrap-up from page 1

VST responds to the needs of victims in a variety of ways. Often they provide emotional support and domestic violence counseling. In 2009 VST reported offering **66** people crisis intervention and **33** people domestic violence advocacy handouts, and **93** people information on the criminal justice system. VST offered safety planning to **89** people. Safety planning includes identifying the present and future risks and lethality of the situation. VST offered community resources to **121** people in need of shelter, support groups, counseling, or specialized service providers.

### Also in 2009, VST...

- Sheltered **3** families in local hotels using our Safety Inn Program (a total of **12** hotel nights donated by partnering hotels).
- Transported **31** families.
- Offered **9** victims transportation with the use of a taxi voucher.
- Offered **5** families relocation assistance with the purchase of a Greyhound bus ticket, Amtrak or airline ticket.
- Provided **30** families with emergency supplies such as food, clothing, or grocery store gift certificates.

## Volunteer Stories: Meet Michelle Lucas

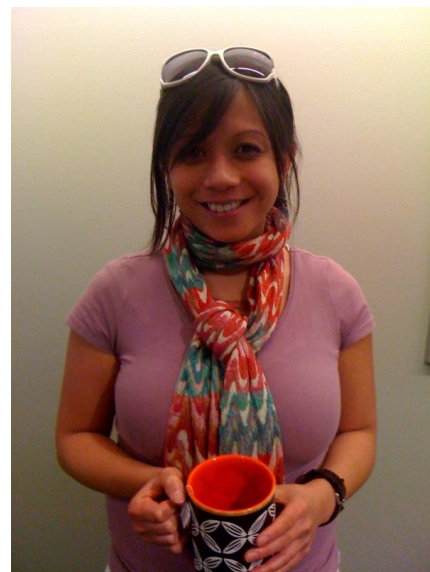
By Siobhan Teahan

At the core of VST services lies the unique commitment of our community volunteers. Let's take some time to get to know one such volunteer this month: Michelle Lucas.

Michelle graduated from the Fall 2007 Academy class, has been a shift trainer since August of 2009 and has worked over 230 hours for VST! She works in the Human Services Department for the City of Seattle assisting case managers with elderly and disabled clients. Recently, on a sunny February morning, Michelle met with me for some coffee to talk about her experience with VST. Here is what she had to say:

*Siobhan:* What drew you to work with VST?

*Michelle:* "I was already familiar with the difficult gap in services in the public service sector from my previous job as a case manager for public housing residents at Solid Ground. I would come in on Monday morning with a huge pile of issues people would have over the weekend that can't be addressed by emergency services. VST's service over the weekend and in the evening is so critical. It increases the efficiency ten-fold for the police and for the domestic violence system of support."



*Siobhan:* Tell me about your most rewarding experience with VST.

*Michelle:* "It's hard to pin point one specific time. I remember I was really nervous on my first call-out and mostly just watched the intervention. On my second call-out I tried to participate more but the person I was talking with was really upset and crying and I froze up. I just said the first thing that came into my mind from academy which was 'This isn't your fault'. She stopped crying and looked at me and said 'It's not? Because he always tells me it is.' Immediately, I saw how important our position was to help break the isolation for this person

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## Domestic Violence Lobby Day

By Kelsey Ryland and Trese Todd

Did you know that someone who steals three cars from three different people could be sentenced to 4-1/2 years of prison time BUT someone convicted of three domestic violence felonies (often with the same victim) may only be sentenced to a maximum of 17 months? This statistic is alarming when we consider how severe a DV crime must be for it to be charged as a felony in the first place. It can be challenging for Victims to rely on the criminal justice system when our sentencing guidelines cannot guarantee a substantial sentence.

Trese Todd, a former VST volunteer, has worked with David Martin from the King County Prosecutors Office and the Attorney General's DV Task Force to try and pass HB 2427 and SB 6203. Trese has testified in support of this bill at three legislative hearings. The objective of these two companion bills is to change the requirements for 'scoring' DV crimes. This will mean that if a defendant is found

guilty of specific DV crimes and convicted of previous DV crimes, there will be harsher consequences and longer sentencing for repeat DV offenders.

Trese shares that on KCCADV Domestic Violence Lobby Day, February 4, 2010:

"House Appropriations Committee Chair, Rep. Jeannie Darneille, stopped the public hearing immediately after the testimony on HB 2427 and went into Executive Session. She then made a passionate statement in support of the legislation and her personal concern for the welfare and safety of domestic violence victims. The Committee then voted unanimously to pass the sentencing reform legislation out of Committee. It will now be sent to the Rules Committees in both the House and Senate and then it would go to the full legislature. We are so close!"

## First Annual VST Cell Phone Drive

By Siobhan Teahan

During the autumn months of 2009, VST members set out in their community to collect used and unwanted cell phones to donate to Shelter Alliance on behalf of VST. The Shelter Alliance Program collects used and unwanted cell phones and recycles them in a socially conscious way. This includes redistributing usable refurbished phones and refining unusable phones using environmentally safe methods. In December, volunteers sent off 395 cell phones and raised over \$1000 for VST! Thanks to all the volunteers who participated and made our first drive a huge success!!



Thanks to all the volunteers who participated and made our first drive a huge success!!

Megan Wilson  
David Sebba  
Michelle Lucas  
Winnie Tsai  
Kathleen Watts  
Cianthe O'Neale  
Ken Fagan  
Trish Campbell  
Arianne Barr  
Sean Klosterman  
Sonia Palma  
Dacia Christin

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and it has stayed with me ever since.

It also means a lot to me to work with people who are young and in the same demographic as I am since I usually work with the elderly at my job. I feel like I can connect with them on a completely different level."

*Siobhan:* What kind of impact has VST made on your life?

*Michelle:* "It's been a huge eye-opener. There are so many things going on in our society that are so easy to ignore. I chose VST and the kind of work I do in human services to stay in touch with that reality."

*Siobhan:* What do you do for self-care?

*Michelle:* "Self-care is so important! Going out on shifts never gets easier. As soon as you think it does, you get a call-out that is really intense and it throws you back into reality. I really focus on self-care with new volunteers when I am on a training shift. It's important to remember not to internalize stuff. You can only help someone as much as they want to be helped. Our response time is so brief, so all you can do is be there when you're needed and tell them what you know."

"VST's service over the weekend and in the evening is so critical. It increases the efficiency ten-fold for the police and for the domestic violence system of support."

## Focus on the Domestic Violence Protected Leave Act

By Siobhan Teahan

The Protected Leave Act (RCW 49.76.030) provides employment protection for victims of a crime and their families. Let's uncover the provisions of the law as it pertains to domestic violence:

*Who qualifies?*

- Any employee who is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.
- Any employee who has a family member that is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking including children, spouses, parents, parents-in-law, grandparents or a person with whom the employee has a dating relationship.

**\*\*Note:** Siblings not included in legal language.\*\*

*For what purposes can leave be taken?*

- Managing legal issues or court dates, to receive medical treatment, mental health counseling or advocacy services, or to ensure safety or relocation. Childcare is covered in emergency situations.
- Cannot self-prescribe leave. Must have documented evidence of court appointments, prescribed wellness leave from doctor, therapist, advocate or support group.

*Is leave paid or unpaid?*

- Leave is without pay unless the employee chooses to use earned sick leave, compensatory time or other paid time off in place of leave taken.

*When can leave be taken?*

- There is no time limit between when victimizing event occurred and when this benefit applies. Can be from a childhood trauma.

*How much notice is required?*

- Advance notice is required.
- In case of emergency where advance notice is not possible, employee must notify the employer no later than the end of the first day of leave. Can notify through third party- friend, advocate, family member, etc.

**\*\*If this stipulation is not met, then employee is not entitled to the benefits\*\***

*Is the employee's privacy protected?*

- The employee must disclose to the employer that they are a victim of one of the listed crimes in order to qualify for leave.
- Employer must maintain confidentiality of this information unless the employee consents to its release or there is a court order or release required by law.

## Support the Victim Support Team

### Donations help supply emergency resources

The Victim Support Team accepts donations, through the Seattle Police Foundation, a 501c3 tax exempt organization.

Currently the program's greatest needs are emergency resources for victims such as bus tickets, grocery store gift certificates, diapers, locksmiths, hotel vouchers, and emergency relocation assistance Greyhound or Amtrak tickets.

## 2009 Program Highlights

By Dana Lockhart

### *Volunteer Appreciation Event ~ April 2009*

In honor of Volunteer Awareness Month, 39 volunteers and their families attended a catered event hosted by VST staff at the Spitfire Grill. Also in attendance were Mayor Nichols, Chief Kerlikowski, and Chief Diaz.

The volunteers were awarded with certificates, photo opportunities with the Mayor and Chief, and gifts to commemorate the event.

VST Volunteer Teresa Barahona was awarded "Volunteer of the Year" for her exemplary service and dedication to the program.

This year's appreciation event will be held at the end of April at a local movie theater for an evening of light-hearted fun.

### *Domestic Violence Awareness Event ~ October 2009*

31 people attended the DV Awareness Event, designed to promote an opportunity to discuss ways that we all can bring more awareness to our communities about domestic violence. We focused on the power of our volunteers, not only to positively impact the lives of the families we work with while on shift, but also to influence the communities we live in. This was a rewarding and enlightening time of reflection, creativity, and sharing.

### Three easy ways to give

- 1- Visit [www.networkforgood.org](http://www.networkforgood.org) for secure online donations through the Seattle Police Foundation.



Make sure to designate "VICTIM SUPPORT TEAM" when prompted.

- 2- Send your checks to:

Victim Support Team, DV Unit  
PO Box #34986  
Seattle, WA 98124

Please make check out to:

Seattle Police Foundation, Victim Support Team

- 3- Call VST Program Manager at 206.615.0890 to make a credit card donation or for more information.

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VST Volunteer Teresa Barahona was awarded "Volunteer of the Year" for her exemplary service and dedication to the program.



In correlation with our event, VST staff also hosted a one-time informal support group to honor the VST volunteers who are also survivors of domestic violence. Held at a local bead shop, VST staff created a space where these volunteers could create, be honored, and share the joys and challenges of working with VST as a survivor.



**Victim Support Team**

PO Box 34986  
Seattle, WA 98124

**Phone:**

206- 684-7721

**Online:**

[http://www.seattle.gov/Police/  
Involved/Volunteer/default.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/Police/Involved/Volunteer/default.htm)

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**VST is committed  
to providing  
comprehensive,  
culturally relevant  
services to victims  
of domestic  
violence and their  
families.**

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## Or, you can get creative...

### Host a party or event

Host a party or event to raise funds and awareness about domestic violence. We can provide speakers and information.

### Start a workplace giving campaign

Your company may have a matching gift program, or be interested in sponsoring a VST fund-raising event.

Want to learn more? Please contact the VST Program Manager to find out how to start a workplace giving campaign at your company.

### Participate in payroll deduction programs

If you are a City of Seattle employee, consider contributing to VST by pledging your financial contribution through the City's Charitable Giving Campaign. It is convenient and easy to give, through pay roll deduction.

Go to [http://inweb/charities/CC\\_Donate.htm](http://inweb/charities/CC_Donate.htm) for more instructions

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